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SUBJECT: KING ABDULLAH'S LOW KEY MOSCOW VISIT

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Jordanian King Abdullah met Putin and his presumptive successor, First Deputy Prime Minister Medvedev, during a February 11 visit that focused on maintaining continuity in Russia-Jordan relations. MFA First Secretary Elbrus Kutrashev and Jordanian Consul Hasan Saraireh told us separately that Abdullah came to Moscow to see Putin for the last time as President and meet Medvedev for the first time, with the goal of consolidating the strong professional/personal relationship that had marked recent Russian-Jordanian ties. This was Abdullah's eighth Moscow meeting with Putin since 2001, a period that saw significant improvement in Russian-Jordanian relations, including Putin's historic 2007 visit to Amman.

¶2. (C) The MFA and Jordanian Embassy noted that Putin and Abdullah's discussion covered a range of international and bilateral issues, while the meeting with Medvedev was largely a courtesy call. In a meeting with the Ambassador February 11, that preceded his session with Putin, King Abdullah said that he found the likely future President briefed on the Middle East peace process (MEPP) and Syria, and engaging on the issue of Russia's economic modernization. According to Kutrashev, Putin and Abdullah touched upon the Lebanese political crisis, the situation in Iraq, and the MEPP. They discussed Russia's proposed Annapolis follow-on conference in Moscow, which both sides agreed should only take place when conditions in the region allowed. Saraireh said that Putin told Abdullah all parties must participate, including a unified Palestinian delegation that included Fatah and Hamas. Saraireh speculated that if Putin maintained this requirement, his chances of presiding over the meeting as President would be considerably low.

¶3. (C) On the bilateral agenda, Putin and Abdullah expressed strong interest in deepening economic cooperation. Specifically, Kutrashev said the two leaders discussed steps to stimulate Russian investment in Jordan, the possible purchase by Jordan of Russian civilian and military aircraft, and construction of a nuclear power plant by Rosatom. Saraireh told us that each of these issues had been under discussion for some time, and that Abdullah's visit did not lead to any final agreements. Russia and Jordan could soon sign an agreement on nuclear cooperation that includes locating a site for a nuclear reactor, but, Saraireh added, if Jordan eventually purchased a power plant from Russia or another country, it could be 2015 before it was operational.

¶4. (C) Both Kutrashev and Saraireh offered similar assessments of the personal diplomacy that has been integral to improved Russian-Jordanian relations. Russian interest in Jordan stemmed from its goal to expand ties, especially economic ones, with the Middle East. Jordan, meanwhile, was anxious to tap into Russian trade and investment that had largely gone to neighbors such as Israel and Saudi Arabia. While these factors produced a commonality of interests, Jordan's small economy and lack of oil precluded intensive

Russian interest in the country. Relations were enhanced, however, by King Abdullah's personal diplomacy, and a relationship with Putin developed over the course of several years. The hope was, especially on the Jordanian side, that Abdullah might begin to know Medvedev and ensure Russian interest in maintaining the existing level of bilateral ties.

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